

the work was done night was fast closing in. The concourse bivouacked around the clearing and lighted their camp-fires under the brows of the forest, which hedged in the scene of the dismal solemnity. Brébeuf and his companions withdrew to the village, where an hour before dawn, they were roused by a clamor which might have wakened the dead. One of the bundles of bones, tied to a pole on the scaffold had chanced to fall into the grave. This accident had precipitated the closing act and perhaps increased its frenzy. Guided by the unearthly din and the broad glare of flames fed with heaps of fat pine logs, the priests soon reached the spot, and saw, what seemed in their eyes, an image of Hell. All around blazed countless fires and the air resounded with discordant outcries. The naked multitude on, under and around the scaffold, were flinging the remains of their dead, discharged from their envelopments of skins, pell-mell into the pit, where Brébeuf discerned men who, as the ghastly shower fell among them arranged the bones in their places with long poles. All was soon over, earth, logs and stones were cast upon the grave and the clamor subsided into a funereal chant, so dreary and lugubrious, that it seemed to the Jesuits the wail of despairing souls from the abyss of perdition.*

This most vivid and succinct description of one great burial ceremony may be regarded as being applicable in a general way to all other great feasts of the dead. It is probable that the various nations, composing the confederacy, differed to some extent in matters of detail, and there is reason to believe that in at least one important particular, the Tobacco Nation differed from the Hurons proper. Referring to the first disposal of the dead, as may be gathered from the foregoing extract, Dr. Parkman says, "The body was usually placed upon a scaffold, or, more rarely, in the ground." When we bear in mind the settled habits of the Tionnontates or Tobaccos and the somewhat limited area they had to occupy, we can readily see that the scaffolding of dead bodies was not so well adapted to them as to peoples who led a roving life over vast extents of country. I have accordingly found numerous evidences that among the Tobacco Nation, inhumation, was the prevalent, if not the sole mode of preliminary disposal. On many of the farms in the Blue Mountain district, the plough has brought to light human remains that had been laid in graves singly, and not far below the surface. On lot 19 of the 7th concession of Nottawasaga, Mr. Edward Becroft informed me that there were on the front or west end of the farm about one hundred single graves, and twice that number on the rear of his property. On the same lot an extensive village had been situated judging by the numerous deep and widely spread beds of ashes, while not far away the manufacture of clay vessels and pipes had been carried on, as is shown even yet by proofs of the most unmistakable kind. There is a large ossuary on the same farm within a short distance of the village site.

If, therefore, we regard the existence of the village as having been contemporaneous with the individual graves, and there is no reason to doubt this, we can understand why inhumation was preferable to scaffolding.

In the account of the great communal burial, quoted from Parkman, reference is made to the topography of the "cleared area in the forest, many acres in extent," and "in the midst [of which] was a pit, about ten feet deep and thirty

* Parkman, *Jesuits in North America*. 21st ed. Boston 1885. p. 72 *et seq.*

It is to be remembered that the description given by Brébeuf, is that upon which are based all the popular notions regarding Indian burials in this country. On the occasion in question there was considerable dissension among the Attigouentons, or Fear Nation, whose feast of the dead he witnessed. A respectable minority consisting of three or four towns, refused to take any part with the others in this ceremony, and declared their intention to conduct one independently. This naturally caused ill-feeling between the dissentients and we are therefore warranted in assuming that on this account, those with whom Brébeuf was present conducted the proceedings with much more "braverie" than was their wont. No doubt the succeeding towns were actuated by similar motives. Is it right then, to regard this as having been a normally typical burial?